



News Release

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Media Contact:
Tom Hudachko, UDOH
(o) 801-538-6232 (m) 801-560-4649
Alex McDonald, IDS
(m) 801-599-9937

Utahns Encouraged to Donate to Organ Transplant Fund

Donations from tax return forms help kids who need transplants

(Salt Lake City) – With the April 15 tax deadline looming, the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) and Intermountain Donor Services (IDS) are encouraging Utahns to make a small financial donation that could have a big impact on a child's life. By checking a box on their state tax returns, Utahns can contribute to the Kurt Oscarson Children's Organ Transplant Fund which provides financial assistance to the families of children in need of transplants.

Past recipients of both organ transplants and financial assistance through the program met for breakfast Monday morning, and to encourage Utahns to contribute to the fund. "Everyday I thank my donor family for giving me a chance to live," said 15-year old heart transplant recipient Ixcel Miguel. "I am also thankful for the kind people who donated to the Kurt Oscarson Fund; it really helped my family with some of our bills."

Approximately 71,000 Utahns contribute to the fund each year, those donations typically add up to \$75,000 - \$85,000. Families apply for assistance through a committee established to distribute the funds. Since its inception in 1995, the fund has helped 85 families pay medical expenses associated with their children's transplants.

Justin Matthews' 3-year old daughter Amelia is currently awaiting a kidney transplant. "For two of her three years of life, Amelia has been on dialysis while she, and us, wait for her to hopefully get transplanted. There are so many kind, giving people out there that have contributed to the Kurt Oscarson Fund. It takes a lot of the stress away having financial support from the fund and knowing that the people of Utah really do care about kids" said Matthews.

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According to figures from the Utah State Tax Commission, more than 343,000 people filed tax returns after April 1 last year. So there are still plenty of Utahns who can help make a difference on their returns this year.

“This fund provides a real lifeline for families during what is an extremely trying time, both emotionally and financially,” said UDOH Executive Director Dr. David Sundwall. “The simple act of checking a box on your tax return can help make things a lot easier for these children and their families.”

Last year in Utah there were 87 deceased organ donors, an increase of almost 25 percent over the previous year. As a result, 251 people were able to receive a life saving transplant and are looking forward to a future that was very uncertain before the transplant.

“Having served on the Kurt Oscarson Children’s Organ Transplant Coordinating Committee since 1997, I can honestly say it is one of the most rewarding aspects of my career,” said Alex McDonald, director of public education for Intermountain Donor Services. “These families are great. They have enough stress in their lives and it is wonderful to be able to help them with some financial assistance.”

In addition to donating to the fund, Utahns are encouraged to also become organ donors. For more information visit www.yesutah.org.

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